

## Reading (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 56)

“Enriched from the first instant of her conception with the splendor of an entirely unique holiness, the virgin of Nazareth is hailed by the heralding angel, by divine command, as ‘full of grace’ (cf. Luke 1:28). To the heavenly messenger she replies: ‘Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word’ (Luke 1:38). Thus the daughter of Adam, Mary, consenting to the word of God, became the Mother of Jesus. Committing herself wholeheartedly and impeded by no sin to God’s saving will, she devoted herself totally, as a handmaid of the Lord, to the person and work of her Son, under and with him, serving the mystery of redemption, by the grace of Almighty God”.

## Prayer

Almighty Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
you have revealed the beauty of your power by exalting the lowly virgin of Nazareth  
and making her the mother of our Savior.

May the prayers of this woman bring Jesus to the waiting world and fill the void of  
incompletion with the presence of her child, who lives and reigns with you and the  
Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen

On this day the eternal Father sent his angel to bring Mary the good news of our  
salvation.

Let us turn to God and pray with confidence:  
Lord, fill our hearts with your love.

## Hymn

### Closing Prayer:

God of infinite love, I thank you for this feast of our salvation,  
right here in the middle of Lent.  
I turn to you to beg for your help.  
I need the inspiration and help of Mary on this journey.  
Please grant me the grace to be humbly faithful to what you are calling me to do.  
Please give me what I need to be free and to be your servant.  
Please let Mary guide us in the path to peace in our world.  
I ask you this, in Jesus’ name.



## The Annunciation of the Lord

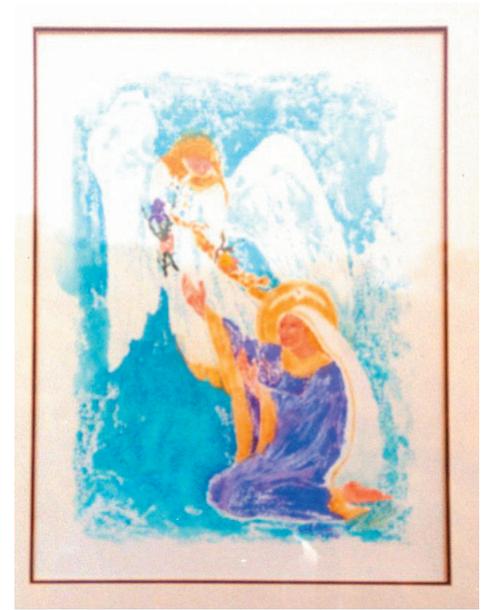
Today we celebrate the wondrous feast of the Annunciation. We witness once more Mary’s courageous decision to put her whole self on the line for the sake of God’s saving action in history. This year, as we celebrate this joyful feast, we are less than a week away from the first reading of the passion and the events that follow in Holy Week. We see today the hopeful beginning of the story that will climax at Easter but only after passing through the passion.

As theologian Elizabeth Johnson notes we find elements of this vivid Annunciation story elsewhere in Scripture. Such stories recount the commissioning of prophets or the birth announcement of persons who will play a special role in God’s saving work. There is always fear expressed in these stories. God’s messenger responds to this fear with the promise of the overshadowing and protective Spirit of God. What stands out as a unique feature of the Annunciation account is the explicit affirmation by Mary that she chooses what God proposes. The prophets spoke God’s will--Mary will embody it secure in the promise of God’s presence. (See Truly Our Sister)

I once believed in a naïve form of the protective power of God with me. I felt secure in God’s love and sure that nothing could harm me. Eventually, however, reality intervened. I was particularly challenged by the slow degeneration of both my parents as Parkinson’s disease robbed them of movement, dignity and serenity. They were the model of fidelity to God who did not, as far as I could see, protect them. Nor was I protected from a kind of endless, grinding grief at their deterioration.

After years of prayer that consisted mostly of raging protest, I eventually came to the vivid realization that God had not protected Jesus either. The only sure bet is fidelity. Nothing that could happen should be read to mean that God had abandoned them, me, us—the fullness of the pattern of Jesus’ life would eventually play out.

God’s call comes to all of us in the midst of the full spectrum of joy, suffering, grief and new birth that is present in our own individual, family, communal, national and global lives. May we hear what God is asking of us, present our fears honestly and choose to put ourselves on the line for the sake of our salvation and that of our world. We are sustained in this by the overshadowing and fruitful Spirit of God. ■



## Gospel (Lk 1:26-38)

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his Kingdom there will be no end." But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" And the angel said to her in reply, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God." Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

*The Gospel of the Lord Praise to you....*

## Responsorial Psalm (Ps 40:7-8a, 8b-9, 10, 11)

R. Here I am, Lord; I come to do your will.

Sacrifice or oblation you wished not,  
but ears open to obedience you gave me.  
Holocausts or sin-offerings you sought not;  
then said I, "Behold I come."

R. Here I am, Lord; I come to do your will.



To do your will, O my God, is my delight,  
and your law is within my heart!"

R. Here I am, Lord; I come to do your will.

I announced your justice in the vast assembly;  
I did not restrain my lips, as you, O LORD, know.

R. Here I am, Lord; I come to do your will.

Your justice I kept not hid within my heart;  
your faithfulness and your salvation I have spoken of;  
I have made no secret of your kindness and your truth  
in the vast assembly.

R. Here I am, Lord; I come to do your will.



## Intercessions

You chose the Virgin Mary as the mother of your Son, - have mercy on all who look for your gift of salvation.

You sent Gabriel to give Mary your message of peace and joy, - give to the whole world the joy of salvation and your gift of true peace.

Mary gave her consent, the Holy Spirit overshadowed her, and your Word came to dwell among us, - touch our hearts that we may welcome Christ as Mary did.

You look with love on the humble, and fill the hungry with your gifts, - raise up the downcast, help all in need, comfort and strengthen the dying.

Lord our God, you alone work wonders and with you all things are possible, - give us the fullness of salvation when you raise up the dead on the last day.

## Prayer

Almighty Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have revealed the beauty of your power by exalting the lowly virgin of Nazareth and making her the mother of our Savior.

May the prayers of this woman bring Jesus to the waiting world and fill the void of incompleteness with the presence of her child, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen

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